

Testimony for Public Hearing
State Administration Committee
February 20, 2013

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SUPPORT: HB 529 - An Act to generally revise laws governing crematoriums

Madam Chair and members of the Committee,

I am a private citizen, a retired librarian, and a widow as of September 2011. My husband lived for about a year after chemotherapy for an aggressive and incurable form of leukemia. We had time to plan for his inevitable death. He wanted to die at home and be cared for there after he died as well, in the time-honored tradition of earlier years. He also wanted to spare me the very large expense of a standard commercial funeral for services he felt unnecessary, unwanted and unnatural to him.

We consulted the coroner about legal and practical considerations. We learned how to prepare and "lay out" the body from resources provided on the Internet by leaders involved in the "family-directed" or "home funeral" movement. I conferred with a crematorium and was able to arrange for us to be able to transport the body directly to him as long as we had the appropriate documents.

Participating in these preparations is an intense, profound and enriching experience that has intrinsic value and gives the reality to saying goodbye.

A year later, a neighbor family found that because of condemnation by funeral directors and a change in business relationships, the crematory could no longer accept a loved one directly from the family, and the cost of the cremation was doubled. This stifling of competition, limitation of choices available, and increased cost to citizens is not ok.

I urge you to pass HB 529. HB 529 will:

- 1) first and foremost, protect the right for families to exercise their own wishes regarding care and disposition of their loved one after death;
- 2) insure that a crematorium responding to those preferences cannot be disciplined for doing so;
- 3) establish that expenses such as hiring a licensed funeral director simply to transport a body are not an essential part of after-death care and need not be mandated;
- 4) serve the desire and need by many Montana citizens for low-cost options to the average \$7000+ commercial funeral.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Suzy Holt

Figure 1. The effect of the concentration of the *Agrobacterium* suspension on the transformation efficiency of *Agrobacterium* strains.